

Quote of the day

"If necessity is the mother of invention, then resourcefulness is the father" – Beulah Henry

the Australian market and became the first children's sleepwear company to use a full-length zipper rather than traditional press studs. "Our range was a result of what was lacking in the branded sleepwear you could buy on the high street – it doesn't shrink and is fade resistant. The zipper was a must for me; press studs are fiddly and take away precious sleeping time. I didn't realise how important these qualities were until I had my own children." Snuggles is now attracting interest from Europe, Asia and the US. "Our garments have attracted parents who, like myself, wanted better quality for their money and even the chance to pass a garment down to siblings – something that is impossible to do with most store-bought sleepwear, which has a short life span."

Melanie manages Snuggles on a daily basis but everyone in her family is involved. She looks to her husband, Chris, a professional AFL player, for advice on colour and design and always runs her ideas past her daughters, Isabella and Sascha. "My husband has a great eye for design and the children give the business a fresh approach. They are the target audience, so I always listen. Mostly they love what we produce, but on occasion tell me they don't like something – I really value their opinions."

Melanie splits her time between the office and caring for her young children and admits it has been a lesson in time management. To balance her work and home life, she sometimes resorts to working at night. "When you are a parent of small children and run your own business you constantly juggle priorities and have to be prepared to work during non-office hours so you can meet your family commitments. Chris and I work hard at balancing everything and get it right most of the time. Running my own business hasn't created a huge conflict – family comes first."

Christopher Mitchell, inventor, Lullabub cot rocker

Sleep deprivation was the spark behind Christopher Mitchell's idea for the Lullabub, the world's first remote-controlled cot-rocking device.

Six months after giving birth to their daughter, Grace, Sarah Mitchell was diagnosed with postnatal depression. "My wife had a vacant look in her eyes; she couldn't sleep or eat and suffered terrible mood swings." For Christopher, the diagnosis was a relief: "We had an explanation for the changes in Sarah's behaviour and, while it took a two-and-a-half month stay in hospital to bring her back, life wasn't as scary with the diagnosis." Based on Queensland's Gold Coast, Sarah and Christopher went on to have two more children, Charlotte and Olivia. Sarah experienced postnatal depression following both births, but was able to receive professional care. Christopher

experienced first-hand the dangers of sleep deprivation during this time and remembers one night holding his crying baby in his arms. "There is a point at which you can lose control. I didn't, but there are many parents out there who, through tiredness, may have behaved in ways they are ashamed of."

Christopher and his wife endured a harrowing period, but it led to a pivotal change in his career. "It was early one morning and I was rocking our second baby in my arms, watching car racing on TV, when I pretended to be a car and put my baby on my lap. I was tired and willing to try anything. With the rapid and jerky motion I created, I noticed my little girl going to sleep," he recalls. Christopher believed he had found a way to help ease the anxiety caused by sleepless nights. His idea was to provide a safe motion, via rockers on the base of cot legs, to help

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– Christopher Mitchell

soothe restless and tired babies to sleep. Christopher resigned from his job as a carpenter to begin the lengthy research and development of his revolutionary product – the Lullabub cot rocker, which mimics the soothing motion of a car. With his insight into the problems many new parents face, Christopher designed the Lullabub to provide a safe environment for children that allows parents to take some time out, sleep or even work.

The process awoke the crusader in Christopher: the Lullabub website, www.lullabub.com, offers parents advice and information on the dangers of sleep deprivation and shaken baby syndrome, and Christopher believes his cot rocker will help prevent unnecessary tragedies. "My own experiences with sleep deprivation will hopefully help other stressed-out parents who need a break," he says. In 2006, Christopher's product won the Australian Design Award and is now receiving international attention. Testament to his innovation, the Lullabub was showcased on the ABC Television show 'The New Inventors' in March this year and was selected as the best invention winner for that episode, as well as receiving the People's Choice vote.

Since the birth of his children Christopher has been actively involved in their care and now runs a business, Babyhugs, from a home office. With his wife fully occupied looking after their three young children, he's on hand to help whenever needed.